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DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED

AT THE INSTALLATION

OF THE

REV. JOHN T. EDGAR,

As Pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Nashville,

DECEMBER 25TH, 1833.

BY PHILIP LINDSLEY.

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DISCOURSE.

Acts xx. 27.

"*For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.*"

In the solemn and deeply interesting interview between Paul and the Elders of Ephesus, which took place at Miletus, as recorded in the twentieth chapter of the Acts, we have a declaration, on the part of the Apostle, of the manner in which he had fulfilled the duties of his ministry; and also his valedictory charge to the brethren, his fellow labourers in the same holy vocation.

I shall not attempt to enumerate, much less to discuss, the several topics dwelt on by the Apostle, nor to construct a regular discourse upon any one even of the most prominent and striking. Instead of confining my remarks to the legitimate province suggested by a particular text or passage of scripture, I shall take the liberty to direct your attention to sundry matters and considerations, rather miscellaneous perhaps, and not strictly connected by any rigidly logical or ethical principles of unity or affinity, but which appear to me not wholly irrelevant to the peculiar solemnities of the present occasion.

I have been directed by the Presbytery to which I owe subjection in the Lord, to preach the customary sermon preparatory to the formal ceremony of installing a Bishop or Pastor over this christian church and congregation.

The relation which is about to be constituted between this people and a minister of Jesus Christ—the relation, namely, of pastor and flock—is assuredly one of no ordinary import or interest. It cannot be contemplated without the deepest emotion, nor be ratified without the most profound conviction of the awful responsibilities incurred by both the contracting parties, as well as by the ecclesiastical judicatory which ordains and sanctions the transaction.

Let the fervent prayerful aspirations of every heart ascend in silence to the great Fountain of goodness, that all our services may be begun, continued and ended with God. That we may be favoured with his gracious presence and holy benediction. And that all the official acts of his church and people this day may be owned, and abundantly honoured to the glory of his great name, and to the everlasting salvation of us and our children—through Jesus Christ our Lord and Redeemer! Amen.

To live and labour—nay, if need be, to suffer and die—in his Master's service, as did the illustrious Paul, must be the earnest and honest wish of every faithful minister of the gospel. He could ask no higher privilege. The most burning zeal—the holiest ambition (if such a phrase be allowable—) could covet no more exalted or glorious destiny. To be able, in the hour of dissolution, and before the Searcher of hearts to exclaim—"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day:"—must prove the consummation of the christian minister's brightest hopes. Alas, how many choose rather to live like Balaam; and with him are content occasionally to utter the good, yet often unavailing prayer—"Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."

To exhibit Paul in all the hallowed brilliancy of his character, it would be necessary to transcribe his entire history from the Acts, and to quote largely from the rich contents of his own masterly Letters. But this is not my purpose. Were I called on, however, for a portrait of a perfect minister of the cross, Paul should sit for the picture. Whether, indeed, Paul were more eminent than any or all of the apostles, I pretend not to decide. It is sufficient that we know much more of him than of the rest; and that all we do know redounds to his fame and bespeaks his excellence. If I might venture to give counsel to my younger brethren, I would bid them study at the feet of Paul, and to take him as their model. And were any people desirous to ascertain what kind of man they might safely elect as their spiritual guide and pastor, I would direct them to Paul. Let them, too, study Paul; and they

will never be at a loss for a just standard of ministerial qualifications. If they cannot find Paul's equal in every respect, they may at least avoid the danger of confiding their souls to a man destitute of Paul's spirit. The Epistles of Paul—more especially those to Timothy and Titus—ought to be diligently and prayerfully perused by every man who is about to assume the sacred office of a bishop, and by the people who are anxious to enjoy his ministrations.

The mutual duties, obligations, affections, interests and responsibilities, involved in this holy relation of minister and people—who can adequately delineate their character or appreciate their importance? Is it then to be our happy privilege this day to welcome from the chief Shepherd and Bishop of souls—the great Head of the church—a man after his own heart to go in and out before us, who will fulfil all his will, and be faithful unto death? (Acts XIII. 22.) Will he study to show himself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth? [II. Tim. II. 15.] Will he be a man of peace, of patience, of zeal according to knowledge, of forbearance, of prayer, of meekness and humility, of untiring industry and perseverance, of inflexible integrity and courage, of decision and mildness, of prudence, charity and holy living?

Will he preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and doctrine? [II. Tim. IV. 2.] Will he take heed unto himself, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made him overseer, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood? [Acts XX. 28.] Will he be an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity? And give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine? [I. Tim. IV. 12. 13.]

Will he, like Apollos, be an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures, well instructed in the way of the Lord; fervent in the spirit, speaking and teaching diligently the things of the Lord? [Acts XVIII. 24. 25.] Will he, like Peter, teach us to lay aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings; and as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby? [I. Pet. I. 1. 2.] Will he, as Paul directs, shun profane and

vain babblings; and avoid foolish and unlearned questions, knowing that they gender strifes; and that the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient; in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves: if God, peradventure, will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth? [II. Tim. II. 16. 23. 24. 25.]

Will he, with paternal solicitude, watch over the tender lambs of the flock, and bear them in his arms to the blessed Saviour, and strive to train them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord? Will he preach the gospel to the poor; and kindly minister to the sick, the afflicted, the despised, the imprisoned, the widow and the orphan? May the homeless outcast, the mourning prodigal, the exiled stranger, the degradded bondman, the famishing pauper, look to him for solace and sympathy, for counsel and relief, as to an angel of mercy and goodness? Will he be the honest friend, the faithful monitor, the discreet counsellor, the instructive companion, to all with whom he may associate or over whom he may exert the influence of his high official character?

Will he be "a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that ne may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers?" [Tit. I. 8. 9. Will he be as the scribe, spoken of by our Lord, 'which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, and is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old?' [Math. XIII. 52.] Will he keep back nothing that is profitable unto us; but teach us publicly, and from house to house, testifying to all men, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ? Will he never cease to warn every one night and day with tears? [Acts XX. 20. 21. 31.] Will he, at every hazard and sacrifice, declare unto us all the counsel of God; and know nothing among us, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified?

Such interrogatories, it is obvious, might be continued until every topic pertaining to the ministry of reconciliation should be reviewed and exhausted. So full and clear, so expressive and pointed, is the language of Scripture on this subject, that not a single trait or feature or quality or gift or attribute of the christian preacher has escaped the pen or pencil of inspiration.

But, notwithstanding the flood of light which is shed upon the subject in scripture—notwithstanding the example of the prophets, of Christ, and the apostles—notwithstanding all the instruction which precept, repeated and varied, and amply illustrated and confirmed by contemporaneous practice, could afford—we are constrained to admit, that, in all ages, egregious mistakes have occurred. Many a false prophet has been received as a true one. Many a wolf has appeared in sheep's clothing. Many a wicked spirit has been hailed as an angel of light. Many a Judas, and many a Simon Magus, have been numbered among the accredited ambassadors of Heaven. Many, very many, have made a good beginning—have appeared zealous and ardent and courageous in proclaiming the gospel for a season;—but when persecution assailed them, or when worldly prosperity and the incense of human flattery addressed the latent springs of vanity or pride, of avarice or ambition, they have turned aside and proved reprobate—"concerning faith have made shipwreck"—and given mournful evidence that the root of the matter had never been in them.

Christendom too, for centuries past, has been disgraced by the enormities of priestcraft, and has been groaning under a yoke of spiritual despotism and of legalized abominations, which the Paganism of Egyptian darkness and of Grecian philosophy would have blushed at. Who could read the history of the christian world, and of what is currently styled the christian church, at least since the usurpation of all ecclesiastical power by the ambitious Constantine, without horror and indignation? And were he to judge of the christian religion exclusively from this dark, bloody, and damning record, he would inevitably reject with scorn the whole system.

Blessed be God! The original charter and constitution of Messiah's pure and holy spiritual kingdom is still in the hands of his people. And to the law and the testimony, to the prophets and apostles, we appeal from every unrighteous decision of kings and pontiffs, of philosophers and wits, of infidels and scoffers; and from all the outrages perpetrated in the name of Christ, since the rejoicing Angel first proclaimed at his birth —"Glory to God in the highest: and on earth peace, good-will towards men!"

The christian world, since the days of Luther, has been gradually assuming a more decent, if not a more heavenly aspect. It is true, we every day witness, or hear or read of scenes and transactions, in some christian land or other, which the grossest superstition and most besotted infatuation of the tenth century could hardly have surpassed in folly or madness. And it is only in our own day that Protestant Christians, with the Bible in every pulpit and within reach of every man, have begun to learn some very plain and simple gospel lessons.

We have made the grand discovery, for example, that the traffic in human flesh is not quite christian. After having stolen and forced from their native home, and transported across the ocean or buried beneath its waves, some forty millions of our African brothers; of whom and their descendants scarcely six millions remain as the fragments and witnesses of our christian charity; we are just beginning to boast of our christian chivalry in attempting to close the floodgates of this long continued and more than fiendish contempt of the most obvious dictates of justice and humanity.

Nor has Africa wept alone under the scourge of christian barbarism. Where are the millions of red men who once held undisputed dominion over this mighty continent, from pole to pole, and from ocean to ocean? The meek, peaceful, self-denying, benevolent Christian, of another hemisphere, whose theoretic creed is, to do to others as he would have them do unto him, has kindly undertaken the management of all these fair lands upon his own account.—After having exterminated the aboriginal possessors, by means and with views, which he dares to parade upon the page of history, as disinterested, magnanimous, philanthropic, christian!*

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*In thus adverting to the slave trade and the gradual disappearance of the Indian tribes from a large portion of this continent, the author had not the slightest reference to any of the *vexed* questions now in agitation respecting slavery or the Indians. If sins were committed in either case, they were the sins of Christendom. As such he noticed them. He believes that pure christian charity would have dictated a different system of policy and conduct in both cases. Such instances prove that one christian age may countenance what the superior light of another will condemn. Or, in other words, that successive discoveries have been made, and are still making, in christian ethicks:—which was the point to be illustrated.

It may be added, that he does not censure the conduct of all the christian colonies upon these shores as equally criminal or barbarous.

How have the Jews been treated among christian nations and by christian churches during the last fifteen hundred years? How are they treated *now* in almost every christian state and city under heaven?

It was, not long since, the acknowledged doctrine of all the civilians, jurists, statesmen, divines, and princes of christian Europe, that it was lawful and meritorious to wage wars of extermination against the infidel Moslems and the idolatrous heathen. And this antichristian prejudice is scarcely yet eradicated.

Look at the history of European colonization and commerce in every quarter of the globe. Alas, what a debt does Christendom owe to pagan Asia, to pagan Africa, to pagan America! Will it ever be repaid? To this point, we are but just beginning to direct our christian charities and energies. It is a most melancholy and most disgraceful fact, that wherever Christians have planted colonies or established trading factories in the vicinity of either Pagans or Mohammedans, they have made the natives worse instead of better. They have invariably inspired the natives with hatred and aversion to christianity instead of winning them to its adoption. This is strictly true even in regard to Liberia. And the missionary of the present day succeeds vastly better among the remote and perfectly unsophisticated heathen in every part of the world, than among those who have come in contact with, and under the polluting influence of the christian colonist, soldier, sailor or merchant, or who have been doomed to share the tender mercies of a christian government.

There were several noble exceptions to the general rule; particularly in North America. European Christians have, however, succeeded by conquest or purchase, by fraud or violence, in acquiring the exclusive possession of nearly the whole continent. And when or where did they ever exhibit the christian virtues in such an amiable light as to command the respect, or to secure the confidence, or to gain the affections, or to ameliorate the character of the natives?

But, it has been said, it is the order of Providence that the savage pagan should give place to the civilized christian: and that the totality of human happiness is thereby greatly augmented. Every species of injustice, robbery and oppression might be defended upon the same ground. These all occur under the divine government. The past and present condition of the Jews has been matter of recorded prophecy for some five and twenty centuries: is it therefore innocent to wrong, persecute and murder them?

Assuredly, we are only beginning to learn something of the nature and obligations of christian benevolence. To believe that the Jew and the Turk, the Hindoo and the Malay, the Negro and the Indian, have souls to be saved; and that it is our duty to contribute a little, a very little indeed, of our worldly abundance for the purpose. We have Bible Societies, Tract Societies, Missionary Societies, Colonization and various other Societies, to accelerate the progress of the great enterprises now on foot for the amelioration of the human character and condition. But we give as grudgingly to these institutions, as does the growling miser to the sturdy beggar —and often for the same reason—namely, to get rid of annoying importunity.

We have just begun to learn that whisky drinking is no very christian accomplishment. That a christian nation of drunkards, is a phrase nearly as ill-sounding and unseemly as a christian nation of robbers or cut-throats. Intemperance therefore, or rather its parent and nurse, the moderate use of ardent spirits, will, we trust, soon be assigned to its proper category among the "damnable heresies" still to be exposed and to be rooted out of the christian church.

But duelling is still sustained by the public sentiment of honourable christian gentlemen, and by all the fashionable literature of the christian world. And so is horse-racing—the most destructive and pernicious species of gambling, dissipation, and reckless knavery, ever yet contrived by the ingenuity of man or demon. Under the shallow pretext of improving the animal *horse*, the sages of Christendom, in their legislative capacity, deliberately expose to ruin, soul and body, reputation and estate, hundreds of thousands of immortal men, women, and children every year.

Christian men, moreover, have not been content with conquering, killing, or enslaving heathens, Jews and Mohammedans. They have persecuted and murdered one another, for opinion's sake, with a relentless fury utterly unparalleled in the history of human depravity. The spirit of intolerant bigotry has pervaded the nominal christian church in every age. And few of the grand divisions into which it has, under divers influences and from divers causes, been rent and organized, can plead exemption from this foul blot. The reformers from

persecuting popery became persecutors in their turn, and assumed as lofty a port and as lordly a bearing and as monstrous prerogatives, as had ever been manifested or arrogated by the infallible hierarchy of the Eternal City. The intrepid Zuinglius, the amiable Melancthon, the learned Calvin, the magnanimous Knox, the martyred Cranmer, were all practical or theoretical persecutors—as were Henry VIII, Elizabeth, and the Stuarts—with a thousand other royal and mitred dignitaries and reverend doctors in every christian land and at each successive period. Nor has this odious tyranny, which commands conformity to the doctrines and ceremonial of a particular church, been even yet subverted or exploded. The fires of Smithfield, the dungeons and the rack of the Inquisition, Star-Chamber and High-Commission Courts, Test and Corporation Acts, Roman Catholic disfranchisement, Autos da fe, it is true, no longer hold out their terrors and tortures to the trembling heretic, who may choose to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience. But there is still much positive and barbarous persecution; as recent occurrences in several of the Swiss Cantons and elsewhere may testify. And the Jews are yet obnoxious to all the perils and penalties of aliens under many christian governments. And even where the lives, property, personal liberty, and political franchises of the subject or citizen are secured and protected by law, there is rife the same persecuting spirit, the same uncharitable ambition to prescribe and control and govern in all matters of religion as heretofore. Though after a different fashion, and by a less revolting species of machinery.

At these several facts and enormities, and perversions of scripture, reason and the inalienable rights of man, I have just glanced, in order to show that, while christians have commenced learning the hornbook of christian ethics, they have much still to learn. If in this science, such wonderful discoveries and advances have been made within the last twenty or thirty years; is it not presumable that a vast deal more remains to be achieved?

I am inclined to think that the province of christian morals —of practical duty—of that comprehensive and universal holiness without which no man shall see the Lord—is not sufficiently studied; and, of course, not as thoroughly developed

and inculcated as it ought to be, by the clergy of our own or of any other church. And that herein they shun or fail "to declare all the counsel of God."

I beg your attention to a few additional particulars illustrative of this branch of my subject.

It was predicted by our Saviour that Antichrist should come. And St. John assures us that "even now [i. e. in his day] are there many antichrists." It is evident from the context, as well as from the whole tenor of the gospel, that whatever contravenes the great law of charity or love, is antichristian. And that whatever savours of this world—of its principles, maxims, honours, riches, vices, policy, usages, selfishness, malice, cruelty—is also antichristian. Now the kingdom of Christ is not of this world. It is a spiritual kingdom. It was never intended by its divine founder that it should be extended, or built up, or sustained by any carnal means or instruments, by fire or faggot, sword or sceptre. It was not destined to assume an organization similar to the ambitious political establishments of mankind; or to exhibit the external pomp and splendour and power and attributes of worldly sovereignty. It courted not, even in its friendless unprotected infancy, the smiles and patronage of kings and emperors. It sought not a partnership with the existing civil governments; much less did it arrogate the right to control or interfere with such governments in the slightest degree. It contemplated no unhallowed union of church and state; no contaminating alliance with the secular throne; no meretricious adornment from the treasuries of venal idolized royalty. No such commingling of the ecclesiastical and civil authorities was ever ordained; nor has it ever been countenanced by a single line or precept of the gospel. The church of Christ has been degraded, debased, adulterated, perverted, shorn of her glory, despoiled of her purity and beauty, and transformed into an engine of worldly ambition and despotism, by every such compliance, compact, association, or usurpation. Every radical deflection or departure from the original constitution of the kingdom, has been, is, and ever will be eminently antichristian.

Had it been the purpose of Messiah to conquer the world and to establish a splendid earthly kingdom, as the Jews expected and as his first disciples hoped, he could easily have

done so by human, divine or angelic agency. But, from the beginning, he declared that such was not his object: and he expressly and repeatedly warned his followers against this fondly cherished delusion. They were to go forth as lambs among wolves—to labour and suffer in preaching the gospel of mercy and charity to enemies—and not themselves to become wolves in the midst of a defenceless flock, or to lord it over God's heritage, or to attempt, by physical force or spiritual terrors, to subject even the most obstinate pagan idolaters to the faith and dominion of the cross.

Every church establishment, therefore, just so far as it is invested with powers, or just so far as it exercises powers, at variance with christian charity—whether towards heathen, Jew, infidel, heretic, or dissenter—is essentially antichristian. Yet such, precisely, has been the condition of all christendom, except our own happy republic, ever since the commencement of the fourth century. A national church is, and must be antichristian; be its doctrines and forms what they may. It imposes by authority a faith and a mode of worship, which, from the very nature of the case, cannot be acceptable to the Deity, when the faith is not voluntarily embraced and the worship not voluntarily rendered. It always subjects non-conformists to some kinds of disabilities, burdens or penalties. It is often exclusive in its structure, laws and discipline, and affects to be the only true church in the land or in the world. Its spirit is arrogant, overbearing; often intolerant and persecuting. Its tendency is to encourage and multiply bigots, hypocrites, formalists and time-servers. It is the nursery of dogmatism and all manner of uncharitableness. The established Presbyterian church of Scotland, and the national Episcopal church of England, are just as antichristian as any Roman Catholic establishment whatever: so far, I mean, as the possession of secular power and the infliction of secular penalties can render them obnoxious to the appellation.

If this be so, then has Christendom yet to learn one of the first and most essential doctrines of the christian school. A doctrine which has been utterly lost sight of during some fifteen hundred years past. This doctrine needs to be luminously unfolded and thoroughly taught in every part of our own country; for we are exceedingly prone to follow European ex-

ample in religion as in most other matters. The crisis too has arrived, when agitators and alarmists are seeking, upon the very ground of this long cherished heresy in the christian church, to excite the fears and jealousy and hostility of the people against the clergy, as a body whose systematic aim is to acquire the same political and ecclesiastical ascendency here, which their brethren hold and so stoutly maintain and defend in the old world. The doctrine of a church establishment—of a union of church and state—or that any one church is entitled to greater privileges or favour from government than another church or than all other churches—ought to be promptly, universally and most decidedly resisted, rejected and condemned as antichristian.

Again: The christian ethical code enjoins the duty of making ample restitution, reparation, atonement, for all frauds, injuries and wrongs inflicted upon our fellow men. This satisfaction is to be rendered, when practicable, to the injured party, or to their posterity, or to their country, or to suffering humanity. No repentance can be genuine where this duty is neglected. "And Zaccheus stood, and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." This is a case in point. It is not in reference to flagrant acts of injustice merely—such as theft, robbery and notorious swindling—that the culprit need be told of his obligation to make restitution. It is that every day business-like creditable mode of getting more than we have a right to, which demands the searching scrutiny of the faithful pastor and the rigid application of the christian rule. Zaccheus was, no doubt, a very honourable, civil gentleman in his station, and his gains were the result of that courteous mode of discharging his official duties, which is characteristic of similar functionaries in every age. And, but for his honest conscience, he might have continued to accumulate wealth in the same fraudulent manner without censure from the world: and he might have died at last with a fair reputation, as multitudes of a similar species do now. Suppose that all the members of the christian church in these United States, who, by a regular course of thrifty management as it is usually deemed, have amassed fortunes, without suspicion or rebuke from the church

or the world, were this day to act exactly as did Zaccheus—what a disgorging of golden hordes should we not witness?

It is the duty of christians to obey the laws of their country in all cases not incompatible with the laws of God. To pay all taxes, for example—"to render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's." The violation of laws, however arbitrary, which constitute a species of crime denominated *mala prohibita*, such as revenue and usury laws, is as contrary to gospel precept as the violation of laws prohibiting crimes *mala in se*—as much so as the violation of any command of the decalogue. Smuggling therefore becomes a crime, under the gospel code, like theft; and restoration to the same extent and in like manner is indispensable. Money obtained by usury—that is, by exacting more for its use than the law allows—cannot be retained a whit more consistently than stolen goods. No man can be a true penitent who has not made restitution for every such extortion. The equity, policy, or expediency of the law prescribing the market price of money can have nothing to do with the question. It may be as absurd or impracticable to regulate the value of money as it would be to regulate the price of cotton—and I believe it to be so. Still, whenever the law does fix the price of either money or cotton, we are bound as christians to obey it. Is this branch of christian ethics well understood by the people, fully explained by the preacher, and duly inspected and guarded by the church?

Sterling christian honesty would lead a man to deal with his fellow men in all things precisely as he would deal with his Maker; and always as if the eye of his Maker were resting upon him and piercing the darkest recesses of his heart. His word would be just as good as his oath or his bond. So far from seeking to evade any obligation, he would be anxious to satisfy it to the uttermost farthing. While he would strictly obey the law, he would never think himself entitled to all he could get by the law. He would never resort to legal quibbles or informalities in order to void or nullify a contract, or to acquire an estate. Where is the christian professor in this community whose word is always implicitly relied on; whose good faith is never doubted; whose upright mode of buying and selling and bargaining and paying is never suspected or questioned; whose known rule of practice is to "owe no man any

thing" which he is not able and willing to pay at the moment when due; who always does pay his debts; who never profits by the ignorance or youth or inexperience or mistakes or helplessness of others under any circumstances; who would rather be cheated than to cheat, or to lose than to gain by craft or ingenious trickery; who, in short, stands forth before the public a thorough, decided, inflexible, true-hearted, honest man? Now every christian ought to be just such a man. And were all christians thus distinguished, the world would not be so much puzzled, as it sometimes is, to discriminate between the christian and the knave.

Men often countenance measures and do acts, in an associated capacity, which as individuals they would reprobate. Were each member of a legislative or religious body, or of any corporation or fraternity or profession, to consider himself as personally responsible for every result which he contributes to produce—how different, in most cases, would not be his conduct?

That the end sanctifies the means, or that it is lawful to do evil that good may come, though generally rejected as a principle of action by writers and speakers, is, nevertheless, too frequently discernible in the wily policy and skilful tactics of religious parties, to justify the conclusion that it has been effectually cashiered even in the Protestant churches of the present day. How much overreaching, misrepresentation, artifice, intrigue, low cunning, or bold assertion of falsehood, do not christian sects still practise towards one another, in order to promote their respective favourite selfish objects, schemes and institutions? To win proselytes, to get money, to build up churches and colleges, or to carry any measure which they deem important or useful?

Christian doctrine requires a man to forgive injuries, and never to avenge his wrongs. And yet how few christian men act up to the precept? Are they not frequently as sensitive to insult, as jealous of their honour, as prone to vindictive wrath, and as clamorous for satisfaction as other men? Is this worldly antichristian spirit duly reprehended by the bishop and church session?

War is another of the antichristian practices still countenanced by nearly the whole of Christendom. And yet, when

the nations shall become truly christian, they will learn war no more.

But waving all further specification, I make one general remark in the way of palliation, and as the best apology or excuse which the nature of the case seems to suggest or to admit of, namely: Practices, customs, habits, usages—which are perfectly antichristian—may be long sustained by the great christian public, while individuals, who indulge in such practices or conform to such usages, may nevertheless be honest christians. As, for example, religious persecution, the slave trade, ecclesiastical establishments, all arbitrary abuse of power, intemperance as created and fostered by the occasional use of ardent spirits, are eminently antichristian. Still, individuals in every age have been chargeable with a participation in these general sins, without being therefore destitute of christian principle. So long as these times of ignorance were winked at, individuals were comparatively innocent. Men contract guilt by committing such sins after they have been duly exposed, acknowledged and condemned. Thus, *now*, it is highly criminal to engage in the slave trade, because its sinfulness is universally admitted. The plea of ignorance can no longer avail. It is criminal *now* to use ardent spirits for the same reason. And whenever war shall be denounced as antichristian by the general voice of Christendom, it will be held criminal for any individual christian to become a soldier in any army or for any purpose. The Quakers already act upon this principle.

I utterly reject the common maxim that men understand their duty well enough, and that the preacher has nothing to do but to persuade them to perform it. Neither the present speaker, nor any one of his reverend or lay hearers, can reasonably pretend to this perfection of knowledge. A thousand practical heresies are current among us and throughout the world, which are infinitely more pernicious than any philosophical or metaphysical or speculative heresies whatever. And yet the latter find no favour or toleration from our spiritual courts, while the former abound unnoticed and uncondemned. The terms *faith*, *doctrine* and *heresy*, by the way, as used in the New Testament, mean something very different from what they are often made to import in polemical treatises and by ecclesiastical bodies.

Now I admit that we all know a great deal more than we perform; and that we preach better than we practise. But even agreeably to the hitherto universally acknowledged and received standard of christian morals, it may be doubted whether ministers are not tempted, from some cause or other, to pass too lightly over the whole ground; and to withhold much that ought to be communicated and enforced. Hence I am led to consider this part of my subject under another aspect.

It is a comparatively easy task for a preacher of the gospel to discuss, explain and defend the peculiar tenets and usages of his own particular church; and yet to "omit the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith." He may be the able, zealous, energetic, uncompromising advocate of orthodoxy, according to the creed acknowledged by himself and his hearers; he may declaim against doctrinal error and heresy with admirable skill and effect; he may be esteemed and lauded as a profound theologian, and as an eloquent, accomplished and powerful pulpit orator; and yet studiously and adroitly avoid those delicate, ticklish, every day duties which bear directly upon the business and transactions of ordinary life:—The notice of which might alarm and offend his sensitive and self-satisfied auditors. A people may be proud of orthodoxy; proud of their evangelical church; proud of their intellectual and gifted pastor; who would nevertheless resent the slightest reprehension of their habitual practices and indulgences.

Hence there frequently obtains a kind of tacit or implied compact or compromise, in regard to these matters, between the people and their pastor. He may preach as rigid a system of doctrinal opinions as he pleases; he may denounce and anathematize all other churches, sects and parties, without let or hindrance; he may dogmatize and argue, and ring changes upon his "drum ecclesiastic" to his heart's content; but, then, he must not disturb their week-day and out-of-church concerns, or presume to scrutinize their daily walk and conversation, or to bring home any of those fearful truths which might create a sensation, or occasion some unpleasant twinges of conscience, or awaken the slumbering inner man until the whole fabric of soul and body should tremble and writhe under the overwhelming conviction that they are still "in the

gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." They expect him to be tender, or charitable, as they express it, to their frailties and infirmities; or, in other words, to wink at and overlook their worldly entanglements and criminal vanities, so long as they maintain a decent exterior and a fair moral reputation among their peers. Such a minister may be regarded as the champion of his church; as the *great* doctor among his brethren; as the very lion of orthodoxy; and be every where praised as the Paul of his generation, who is "earnestly contending for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."

I mean not to usurp the office of censor general on the present occasion. Much less do I mean to reprove the respected fathers and brethren before whom I speak; for of their practice I know nothing which is not worthy of hearty approbation. Nothing therefore that I have already uttered or am yet to say can be designed for personal application. *Qui capit, ille facit.* Every individual must judge for himself. With this disclaimer, I proceed.

There are good men who are constitutionally timid and infirm of purpose—who cannot muster resolution or acquire faith enough to do all that is required at their hands. Such were Eli and Jonah. Alas, how grievously did they suffer for their neglect of known duty! Such men demand our prayers and our sympathy.

That species of christian courage and intrepidity which never shrinks from the most painful and perilous service, and which never shuns to declare all the counsel of God, is as much needed in this age of comparative tranquillity and conventional propriety as it ever was in the most fanatical and troublous times. And it is more needed where wealth and learning and refinement and fashion abound, and shed a dazzling lustre over the worst traits of human depravity, than in less distinguished and more unpolished places. Bible heroes may still serve as our model. Their moral daring is called for, not merely before European courts and lords and potentates, but before the great men of our own simple republic.

Does it not sometimes happen that a clergyman will rebuke and admonish a poor man—a powerless man—an humble uninfluential man who may have offended; while yet he would spare an equally criminal transgressor if found in a higher sphere?

Are there not time-servers and respecters of persons now and in our own country, as there were formerly and in every other country? Is every minister ready now to approach the greastest or richest man in his congregation, and deal with him honestly, as Nathan did with David, and say to him, "Thou art the man?" Or as John the Baptist did with the murderous profligate Herod, and tell him plainly, that it is not lawful to retain the wages of iniquity, or to indulge in this or that vice or course of dishonesty or dissipation? Does he "reason of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come," before every unprincipled Felix? Or endeavour to convert to the pure faith of the gospel every lordly Agrippa, without fear, favour or affection, and without regard to personal consequences? As did the undaunted and heroic Paul?

Such a man is needed in every congregation, and more especially in our cities and larger towns. And though he may not "buy golden opinions from all sorts of people," he will assuredly win a crown of unfading glory, if not of martyrdom, for his fidelity. He may be driven from his post into the savage wilderness—as the apostolic Edwards was driven from Northampton, because he chose to obey God rather than to deceive and flatter and obey great men. And what then? Will he be a loser? Was Edwards a loser by his inflexible integrity? Upon whom has his mantle fallen?

I pass to another branch of my subject, or rather to another series of topics suggested by the occasion.

The visible catholic or universal church under the gospel, consists of all those throughout the world, who profess the true religion, together with their children.

It would seem from the whole scope and tenor of divine revelation, that the true worshippers of Jehovah should harmonize in faith and in affection. This was expected of the Israelites under the Mosaic dispensation. It was demanded of believers under the New Testament dispensation. No precept is more frequently inculcated, or more amply illustrated, or more authoritatively enforced by our Saviour himself, than that the *brethren*, his disciples and followers, should love one another. That they should call no man Rabbi, or master, or father: and that they should consider all who were not against him, as for him.

Among the first converts to the gospel, after the resurrection of their Lord and the signal outpouring of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, we find the spirit of charity and concord actuating every heart and beaming from every eye. "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart, and of one soul: neither said any of them, that ought of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things common." Here we behold the genuine fruits of gospel faith—the infallible evidences of spiritual regeneration—which none could mistake or counterfeit. What christians then were, they ought still to be. They were of one heart, and of one soul. They walked together in peace and unity because "they saw eye to eye"—because "they were agreed." Agreed, namely, in heart, in temper, in purpose, in principle, in one grand aim and object and pursuit—not in all the circumstantials and forms of worship, or in all the opinions which arise on the subject of religion. For in regard to the latter, the apostles themselves did not agree, as we soon discover. Even "Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation" with certain brethren from Judea about circumcision. And presently, Paul and Barnabas themselves differed about taking Mark as a fellow missionary on a visit to the new converts in sundry cities. "And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus." Again, "when Peter was come to Antioch, I [Paul] withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed." Here, let it be observed, that Paul withstood Peter to the *face*, like an honest man and a good christian. He did not abuse and slander and traduce and mangle and murder his character and reputation behind his back. He was manly and generous and aboveboard in his censures and rebukes; and scorned to play the insidious, cowardly, sneaking part of a whisperer and backbiter and talebearer. This may serve as a goodly lesson for ministers of different sects, and of the same persuasion, in their official and social intercourse with one another.

The best men have their infirmities. And from the specimens just cited, it is evident that the followers of Christ may differ greatly and warmly about many secondary and unessential points, and be so united in sentiment and affection, as still

to constitute one harmonious brotherhood. This is all that can be hoped for, probably, in the present imperfect state of trial, temptation, ignorance and prejudice. But this much of union —this strong bond of charity, reaching every heart and joining together all the faithful, as the branches are united to the vine—we have a right to anticipate. And all this would have been realized from the beginning to this day, had the dying commands of the Master been duly honoured. But how soon did christians betray their eagerness to go astray from the right paths, and to violate the new and great commandment which required them to love one another, and to bear no other name than that of Christ?

We behold the seeds and evidences of this strange perverseness and bigotry and uncharitableness and pride of opinion, revealed in the Acts, and more especially in the Epistles, of the apostles themselves. Jealous dissensions and distinctions soon prevailed between the Jewish and Gentile converts. These again enlisted under divers leaders and favourite preachers; and were designated as being of Paul, or of Apollos, or of Cephas, or of Christ. It is true, every tendency to divisions, and to the assumption of party appellations, was promptly checked and condemned by Paul and the other apostles. Still, the spirit of disunion grew stronger and stronger, until, under various influences and admixtures from the schools of pagan philosophy and the temples of pagan idolatry, the christian church exhibited the deplorable spectacle of a great family rent into a multitude of hostile, angry, rival, conflicting factions: each claiming the highest apostolical authority for every procedure, and yielding nothing to the reason, the conscience, or the weakness of any dissident or heterodox brother of a different school. So rapid was the march of this anti-christian spirit, that, long before the apostles had ceased to labour, sects and parties, furious and arrogant, were every where to be found. The evil, of course, increased after their departure; and was by no means extinguished by the storms of persecution which burst upon the defenceless christian under the Roman Neros; nor was it consumed by the ten thousand fires which lighted the sainted martyr through the dark valley and up to the throne of Immanuel's glory.

"For the time will come, (said the Apostle,) when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears." I need not stop to tell you how soon and how fearfully this prediction was fulfilled; nor expatiate on the pitiable aspect and deplorable condition of Christendom when overrun with error, heresy, and all manner of human inventions. It is sufficient for the object which I have in view to know the fact, that, for many centuries past, the church of Christ has been divided into sects and parties; and that it now exists under various distinct forms of ecclesiastical organization. Whatever may have been the direct or remote causes of this unhappy result—such is the present state of the great christian community. Divisions exist—different churches exist—and many of them differ widely from each other. Uniformity in matters of belief, in the modes and forms of public worship, in discipline, in church government, is scarcely to be expected or hoped for, within any assignable period: if, indeed, such a felicitous consummation be not altogether visionary and unattainable.

We are to act then, as best we can, according to existing circumstances. And the question obviously occurs—how is any particular church to discharge her own duty within her acknowledged sphere of enterprise, in behalf of perishing souls, and towards her sister churches?

All ministers of the gospel may now be regarded as sustaining a twofold character and relation. First, as heralds of salvation, duly commissioned to preach the gospel to sinners: and secondly, as the officers and advocates of the particular church to which they belong. Thus, the Episcopalian, the Independent, the Presbyterian, the Methodist—while they severally break the bread of life and unfold the mysteries of divine revelation in all honesty and godly simplicity—feel it to be their duty also to inculcate and defend their own respective tenets and ecclesiastical polity. These two distinct classes of duty are often so mixed up and confounded, as to occasion bitter controversies, lamentable breaches of charity, and the most egregious mistakes about the essential characteristics of genuine piety.

1. The several churches or denominations differ, in the first place, about church government. Here, indeed, there is ample scope for diversity of opinion, and for the exercise of reason, judgment, and a sound discretion—because the New Testament does not *prescribe* any ecclesiastical constitution or precise form of church government. But, as no community, civil or religious, can flourish or long exist, without a regular government, so the duty of obedience to both civil and spiritual authority is most clearly and positively enjoined upon all men under the light of the gospel in every age. The necessity of some kind of government, however, is one thing: the *form* is a very different affair. Had the form of church government been deemed indispensable, as part and parcel of the christian system, it cannot be doubted that its divine Author would have given the most explicit and definite instructions upon the subject. No such specific directions are recorded. It appears to have been left to the discretion and wisdom of the apostles and their coadjutors to adopt such rules and to institute such a form of government for the infant churches, as they judged expedient in the then state of the world. It is not intimated that the peculiar church organization, established by the apostles, was to be of universal and perpetual obligation. If, indeed, the apostles had declared that they acted in this matter by divine inspiration, and that their system was to be permanent and unalterable—and if we could ascertain what their system was—then the question would be at rest. There would be no uncertainty, and no ground for controversy. In the absence however of all positive precept, it is needless to search the imperfect and mutilated records of antiquity in order to ascertain what constitution or system the apostles actually did sanction: because, if it could be clearly demonstrated that they established either Presbytery or Episcopacy, for example, it would not thence follow that the christian church in all ages and countries must conform to the same usage. If they were permitted to exercise their own judgment in the government and discipline of the church, the same liberty remained with their successors. The *de jure divino* claims therefore which some churches prefer, to be exclusively apostolical and scriptural in their constitutional organization, would seem to be unreasonable and groundless.

The time has been when the champions of monarchy pleaded scripture in behalf of their favourite system; and strenuously argued that the king, the Lord's anointed, was not only the sole legitimate head of a christian nation, but that he was entitled to the passive obedience of all his subjects. Christ and the apostles enjoined subjection to the "higher powers"—to pagan emperors and their tyrannical viceroys—"for there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God." And we are exhorted to make supplications "for kings and for all that are in authority." But, at the present day, such precepts will not be urged in behoof of the divine right of kings, or to sustain the oppressions and extravagancies of royalty. The argument from apostolic precept and practice is as cogent and conclusive in favour of monarchy, as it is in favour of the primitive ecclesiastical government—whatever that may have been. If christian men can exercise christian charity towards each other, though living under divers forms of civil government, from the most rigorous despotism to the purest democracy; why may they not cherish the same kindly sentiments, though living under different forms of church government?

The Episcopal, the Presbyterian, and the Independent or Congregational forms, under various modifications, are adopted by the great body of christians; and they certainly differ widely from one another. But may not a man be a good christian and a faithful minister of the gospel under each or either? Shall we then reject him, or denounce him, or unchurch him? I mean not to arraign the practice of any, or to decide upon their several merits and pretensions. To their own Master they stand or fall. There have been, and still are, individuals among each of these grand divisions, who sturdily maintain the *divine right* of their respective church constitutions. Others are content to defend their church upon different principles.

Presbyterians believe that they have at least as clear a warrant from scripture and apostolic usage for their form, as either the Episcopalians or Independents. And if scripture and the primitive practice of christians be appealed to as the sole rule and standard to determine the question, they never shrink from the issue. If, however, neither scripture nor apostolic

institution be regarded as decisive—and if they feel at liberty to defend their system upon those general principles of expediency and propriety already suggested; they are at no loss for reasons and arguments to sustain their cause and to justify their preference. It is desirable, certainly, that every Presbyterian should be made acquainted with the theory, principles, and advantages of the Presbyterian form of church government. Just as it is desirable that every American citizen should be well informed concerning the constitution, laws and policy of his country. Not that this knowledge is absolutely essential in either case to constitute a sincere christian. But as every man owes allegiance, fealty, obedience, duty, to the civil government which protects him, and to the church which provides for his spiritual wants, and which guides his steps onward and upward towards the heavenly Canaan, it is difficult to conceive that he can be a very exemplary and useful citizen or christian while ignorant of his relations and obligations in so large a province or department of active service.

A Presbyterian Bishop ought then to instruct his Presbyterian flock upon the subject of Presbyterian church government. He ought to show them that church government, like civil government and parental government, is a divine institution; necessary to the very existence of the church, and to the well-being of every society great and small; and therefore, that obedience to such church government as they may have voluntarily preferred, is as much a duty as obedience to parents or civil magistrates. He ought to show them that the Presbyterian system is scriptural—that is, not only not contrary to scripture, but as strictly in accordance with apostolic usage as could reasonably be desired; and that, on this score, no other denomination can boast of precedence or advantage. That it is congenial with the tenor, spirit, and benevolent character of the entire christian scriptures—eminently auspicious to evangelical truth and purity—harmonizing exactly with the civil government and free institutions of our own happy country—and that it is in truth as perfect a model of a pure democracy or representative republic as can be found in the world.*

*The author spoke, of course, as a Presbyterian. The advocates of other forms or systems may be equally satisfied with their own in these respects; and may sustain them upon similar or better grounds. He questions not their sincerity, their judgment, or their piety—much less their right of opinion and choice.

Should he be called to preach an occasional sermon to a people or congregation, not Presbyterian in government, he ought to say nothing on the subject. He ought then neither to laud his own nor to censure any other. Just as he would abstain from inculcating republicanism or depreciating monarchy in Austria, Britain or Russia.

A man may, however, be a rigid Presbyterian, and yet be but a sorry christian. He may be a thorough christian and no Presbyterian. And we venture, with all humility, and with becoming deference to superior wisdom and knowledge, to assert, at least to hope, that it is possible for a man to be a conscientious, enlightened, judicious, liberal, charitable, laborious, self-denying Presbyterian Bishop, and at the same time maintain the character and discharge the duties of a christian minister and a christian citizen as completely as ever did the most devoted apostle. Or as do any of our equally conscientious Episcopal, Methodist, Congregational or Baptist brethren.

2. In the second place: Much diversity of sentiment and practice obtains about the rites, forms and ceremonies of public worship. Here, again, we find nothing prescribed in the New Testament. Under the Jewish economy, these were deemed essential; and they are so minutely described that none could possibly mistake their character. The Christian dispensation is, in its whole exterior, a perfect contrast to the Mosaic or ancient Jewish system. No external pomp or display, no expensive preparations or onerous observances are demanded in the christian worship. All is simple, easy, cheap and spiritual.

Baptism and the Lord's Supper are the only positive institutions which can be adduced as exceptions to the rule. Protestants acknowledge no others. And even these are not enjoined with any particular specification as to time, place, form and manner—like the Mosaic ritual. The only controversy among Protestants (except the Lutheran peculiarity about the Eucharist,) is limited to the form and subjects of Baptism. Presbyterians recognise the validity of baptism, whatever may be the form of its administration: and they admit to this ordinance the children of believers as well as adult converts. Whether right or wrong, such is their doctrine and practice. They concede to others the right of judging for themselves,

and they claim the same privilege. They ought to differ in charity: and never to upbraid or condemn those who cannot in conscience accord with them in these particulars.

3. In the third place: Christians have adopted creeds, confessions, or articles of doctrinal belief, which differ from one another. Here also, it may be observed, that no system of opinions or series of propositions distinctly enunciated, is enjoined in Scripture as the object of faith or as essential to salvation. The faith spoken of in the gospel has respect to an individual, to the Messiah, Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Saviour of sinners. And it implies obedience to all his commandments and instructions. The term *doctrine*, in the New Testament, does not mean a speculative opinion, but a practical precept or principle. Every man, with the Bible in his hands, is at liberty to interpret the divine will as therein exhibited, according to his own best judgment. This privilege is conceded to him by the gospel and by the common consent of Protestants. Neither his reason nor his conscience ought to be enslaved, or subjected to the arbitrary dictation of any human power or judicatory whatever. He may voluntarily adopt the creed or confession of any church; and then he is bound in conscience to adhere to it, so long as he sustains the relation implied and created by such a connexion.

Protestants intended that the Bible alone should be their paramount rule of faith and practice. In subordination to this principle and with its explicit recognition, they soon found it necessary or expedient to prepare certain compendious formularies, exhibiting the most prominent articles of their scriptural belief; in order to avoid the misconstruction of their enemies, and to maintain harmony and concert among themselves. Whether they acted wisely or unwisely, is not the matter of my present inquiry. It would not be very charitable or discreet to condemn their conduct in this particular, until it be shown that any sect or denomination of Christians has been able to get along without a creed of some sort, expressed or well understood. Those, at this day, who have no written or printed creeds, or who profess to make the Bible their only guide and standard, do nevertheless impose their own peculiar interpretations and translations upon their disciples: and they all have some formal test of qualification for church member-

ship. We have yet to learn whether the Bible, simply and exclusively, and agreeably to each individual's own construction of its import, can be made the sole bond of union, communion, and church membership among any set of christians.

I am as staunch an advocate for the all-sufficiency of the Bible, without note or comment, and for the unrestricted liberty of private interpretation, as any *Bible Christian*, so called, in our country or in the world, can be. I would send the Bible, and give the Bible, to every family and to every individual upon the face of the earth. I would send it abroad without creeds; and where no living teacher or expositor could be found. I would exhort all men every where to search the Scriptures diligently and prayerfully: and never to yield assent to the dogmas of any preacher, or of any school, or of any ecclesiastical authority, which are not clearly supported by holy writ. Suppose all creeds, confessions, articles and forms were at once annihilated; and that nothing remained but the Bible and the Ministry. How should we judge of the preacher's doctrine? Undoubtedly, by an appeal to the Bible. And do we not judge the preacher now—every sermon, every theological treatise, every existing creed, every directory of worship—by the same unerring standard? Is any man's liberty infringed or impaired by his voluntary approval of a "form of sound words," which he verily believes to be taught in the Bible?

But, it will be objected, the evil consists in the bias given to childhood and early youth in favour of a particular system, before the party can exercise his own understanding upon the subject. He is blindly and insensibly trained in the nursery, and by parents and ministers, to the adoption of opinions which he never afterwards thinks of investigating. They become a part of his nature—of his intellectual and religious nature—and it is vain afterwards to attempt to convince him of error or to divest him of his shackles. There is weight in the objection. At least, it is specious and imposing. Bring it however to the test of experiment. Let us see. A parent objects to creeds, catechisms, and all manner of religious instruction at school or church, lest his child should be prejudiced or misguided. He must then either teach his child himself, or suffer him to grow up utterly ignorant and careless

about religion. If he should himself become the teacher, he will of course inculcate his own religious sentiments. And if he should use the Bible as his text-book, he will impart his own views of its doctrines and contents; and thus will be rivcting upon the mind and heart of his child as substantive and as sectarian a creed as Calvin, Laud, Socinus or Fox could have devised. And one article of this parental creed will be, a thorough contempt of all creeds. The child, when a man, will fancy himself freed from vulgar prejudice—from the dominion of priestcraft—from bigotry, superstition, and all arbitrary prescriptive laws, rules and guides. He is liberal, and charitable, and wondrously catholic, in his own estimation. And he gives ample demonstrations of both modesty and charity, in boldly denouncing creeds, and in thundering forth anathemas against all who are silly enough to adopt them.

If, on the other hand, the child be left to his own wayward fancies, without religious check or instruction, until he arrives at mature age; he will enter upon the theatre of action, a skeptic, an infidel, a heathen—perhaps a reviler of the Bible and a scoffer at all sacred institutions—a monster, it may be, in human shape—a hopeful candidate for the gallows—and a fit companion for the blaspheming rebellious spirits shut up in the dark prisons of despair, "where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

In these remarks, I have no reference to any existing sect, church or party; nor to any living or known individuals. I have made a supposition, and have pointed out the inconsistencies, contradictions and miseries which it involves.

I admit that a man has a right to reject every religious creed in the world—except the Bible. But, then, such a man has no right to impose his mode of understanding the Bible upon any human being. He may repudiate creeds, in the exercise of his own christian liberty, and upon his own responsibility. But he is expected to concede to others the privilege of adhering to creeds if they choose. When I meet with a man who professes to own no creed but the Bible, I blame him not. I do not charge him with error. I hold no argument with him on the subject. I esteem him not the less a christian on that account. I judge of his christian profession by another standard—by his habitual temper, walk and conversa-

tion—by his humble, consistent, upright, charitable bearing —by the fruits of the Spirit, which cannot be easily counterfeited. The Bible is a good creed. There can be no better. Let him study it, pray over it, and drink deeply into its heavenly spirit. I will not pester him about other creeds, nor seek to proselyte him to my own church or party. I give him my hand and my heart; and cheerfully acknowledge him as a brother in Christ.

But should a *No Creed Man* insist upon my subscribing to his *no creed*—should he, while he claims exemption from all human authority, and professes to go to the Bible alone for his religious principles, require me to pursue the same course and to arrive at precisely the same conclusions with himself—should he, in short, demand of me any test, whether doctrinal or ceremonial, in order to christian fellowship with him or his church; I should beg to remind him that the Pope is still at Rome, and that in this portion of North America we happen to enjoy liberty of conscience. I ask of him neither more nor less than I freely yield. Thus it is, that I understand the civil constitution of my country, and the behests of christian charity. I dictate to no man. I suffer no man to dictate to me. I fearlessly appeal to the Bible as my only standard of faith and practice. And if I find a brief exhibition of the leading facts and doctrines of the Bible, adopted by a class or society of christians, with whom I may think it desirable and profitable to be connected:—do I act inconsistently or unworthily in becoming a member of such an association by subscribing to its rules? Is there a church on earth—is there a society or company of any description or for any purpose—which does not impose a *creed* of some kind upon its members? The shortest creed that I at present recollect, is the one imposed on the members of Temperance Societies. They must *believe* that the moderate use of spirituous liquors is injurious and criminal: and they promise not to drink, manufacture, give or vend them, so long as they hold this *creed* on the subject. Most religious creeds are somewhat longer: and so are the creeds of literary and philosophical societies, as well as those of banking, insurance, and rail-road companies. The most intolerant and contradictory creeds, are party political creeds: and these are swallowed every day in folios, by those who would nauseate a

single page if tinctured with a drop of religious doctrine. And I believe the creeds of professed skeptics are not remarkable either for their brevity, their simplicity, their perspicuity, or their freedom from arrogant assumption or authoritative dictation or arbitrary requirement.

I do not present myself before you this day as the champion of creeds. I heartily wish that they could be dispensed with, and that Christians would be content with the Bible—that they would suffer one another to interpret it as best they can, and agree to differ in opinions as they do in features, without indulging one unkindly or uncharitable sentiment. But as I have never yet discovered the church or the individual thus charitably constituted or disposed—as I happen to belong to a body of Christians possessing a creed; having been born and bred a Presbyterian, (this may have been my misfortune, it could not have been my fault;) and having lived to this good day a contented, though not, I trust, a bigoted Presbyterian; and expecting to die a Presbyterian, and in charity, I hope, with all men—I have said thus much, and I shall add a little more, on the subject of creeds, partly in self-defence, and chiefly to exhibit our humble claims to the kindly forbearance and courteous treatment of other equally charitable Christians.

I state our case thus. All christian churches, sects and parties, large and small, throughout the world, without one exception, have in fact *creeds*, written or unwritten. They all have rules and regulations of some kind. And they all demand of every individual whom they admit into their respective bodies, some profession, declaration, acknowledgment or promise, or some visible token or action or ritual observance—a *Shibboleth*, in a word, which, whatever may be its length, form or significancy, is, to all intents and purposes, a *creed*. The principle involved is the same whether the creed be an inch or a thousand leagues in extent. Presbyterians, then, are placed on the same footing, so far as creeds are concerned, with all other Christians—not excepting the *no Creed's men* themselves, as we have shown. The only further question worth investigating is, whether their creed be as sound as that of their sister, or rival, or hostile churches? This point is easily settled.

All the creeds which were adopted by the earliest Protestant Churches, in the days of Luther or soon after his decease, speak the same language and teach the same doctrines. The only difference of opinion worthy of notice respected the Eucharist or Lord's Supper. Luther and the churches known by his name held the doctrine of consubstantiation. Calvin and the other reformed churches rejected it, as they did transubstantiation. They entirely harmonized in nearly all those doctrines which have, since the days of Arminius, caused so much angry controversy and metaphysical speculation among divines and philosophers. Upon most of these points, Luther was as strictly *Calvinistic* as Calvin himself. Upon the points, now so generally stigmatized as Calvinistic, all were agreed; or they agreed to differ in charity.* The creeds, confessions and articles of the reformed German, Swiss, French, Genevese, English, Dutch and Scottish churches, were all equally Calvinistic, in the only sense in which Calvinism has been justly predicated of any creed. And they are as Calvinistic now as they ever were. So far then as the authorized creeds of these several churches speak upon the doctrines usually denominated Calvinistic, they would be readily embraced by the most rigid Calvinists of any school. Presbyterians therefore are no more chargeable with the sin of Calvinism than many other honoured and honourable churches.

The term, indeed, ought never to have been introduced into our theological vocabulary. *Calvinism* is as ancient as the primitive fathers: and St. Augustine as ably expounded

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*Had Luther and Calvin agreed upon the subjects of the Eucharist and Church Government, it is manifest that all their other differences might have been easily adjusted, so as to have secured their friendly cooperation in the common cause of Protestantism. The fundamental doctrine of justification by faith alone was equally maintained by both. Nor was it rejected by Arminius, as some modern authors would insinuate. "So sound, indeed, are the Arminians with respect to the doctrine of justification, a doctrine so important and essential in the opinion of Luther, that he scrupled not to call it "Articulus ecclesiæ stantis vel cadentis;" that those who look into the writings of Arminius may be disposed to suspect him of having even exceeded Calvin in orthodoxy. It is certain, at least, that he declares his willingness to subscribe to every thing that Calvin has written on that leading subject of Christianity, in the third book of his Institutes. And with this declaration, the tenor of his writings invariably corresponds." And yet the Bishop of Lincoln, in a work lately published against Calvinism, represents the doctrine of justification by faith as a peculiarity of Calvinism!

and defended the system as did the Genevese reformer himself. Nor does any man adhere to the Calvinistic tenets at the present day, because they were inculcated by either Augustine or Calvin, or by any ecclesiastical council or synod; but simply and solely because he believes them to be taught in the Bible, or fairly deducible from a rational philosophy. They may be erroneous, extravagant, absurd, or incomprehensible—still, we must in charity admit that they may be honestly received and piously cherished. And if charitably maintained, no man has a right to pass sentence of condemnation upon their advocates. The terms *Calvin*, *Calvinism*, *Calvinistic*, are not found in our Confession of Faith; nor do they especially or exclusively befit our theological system.

It is unfortunate that any appellation, derived from a distinguished christian doctor or divine, should ever have been fastened upon any portion of the great christian family. The apostles condemned all such profane applications or appropriations in their day—as their divine Master had done before them. It is still more unfortunate when the name, from any circumstance or association, can be rendered odious and repulsive. Thus has it fared with Calvin. He was a persecutor. He burnt Servetus. *Ergo*, Calvinism must be diabolical: and all Calvinists must be bigots and persecutors. Such is the logic in current use. And the poor Calvinist must be content to be buffeted and ridiculed and abhorred, because he happens to think on some abstruse points of metaphysical theology as did one John Calvin in the sixteenth century; and because the said Calvin enacted a part in a certain tragedy which no enlightened sincere christian upon earth would countenance in the nineteenth century—though expressly approved and highly lauded by Bucer, Beza, the *gentle* Melancthon, and all their coadjutors at the time; and though the horrible practice of persecuting heretics universally prevailed, and continued unabated many years after their death. It was the besetting sin of the age. Those were times of ignorance—like our own in regard to the slave trade and intemperance—which God winked at. But now he commandeth all men every where to repent of this iniquity. A command which we have not yet learned to obey.

The fact that Calvin persecuted Servetus has long been, and continues to be, the most popular argument against Calvinism. Now this argument should either prove a great deal more, or be directed against a totally different doctrine. It should go to the condemnation of his whole system, or only of the particular doctrine which led to the fatal catastrophe. Whereas, his entire system has never been rejected on this ground by any sect: and the particular doctrine about which he contended with Servetus, is still the doctrine of nearly the whole of Christendom. Servetus was condemned and executed for blaspheming the Holy Trinity, by the public council or senate, agreeably to the laws of Geneva. Or, if you please, Calvin condemned and burned Servetus, because he disbelieved the doctrine of the Trinity. And yet, who ever thinks of depreciating or ridiculing or rejecting the doctrine of the Trinity, because Calvin persecuted Servetus on its behalf? Why then seek to identify with this detestable persecuting spirit, other tenets of Calvin which had no more to do with the transaction than his Astronomical or Mathematical principles? The grand error of Calvin was, a belief in the lawfulness of punishing or persecuting heretics. This was the only *Calvinistic doctrine* which caused the death of Servetus. And this has been the doctrine of all religious persecutors of every sect in every age and country.*

If all the christian churches and denominations of the present day are held amenable at the bar of public opinion for the errors maintained and for the enormities perpetrated by their christian predecessors; Presbyterians will not shrink from their full measure of this responsibility. Nor do they dread any historical scrutiny or comparisons which may be instituted. In Great Britain, during the entire reign of the Stuarts, they suffered the most unrelenting persecution. That they occasionally retaliated upon their oppressors with tremendous fury; and that they sometimes persecuted, in the worst sense of the term, will not be denied. *But upon the soil of America, they have never persecuted a solitary indi-*

*It will be perceived that the case of Calvin has been stated agreeably to the prevalent belief among his enemies. The speaker's object was not to justify or defend Calvin, but to meet the precise objection which is so triumphantly paraded on all occasions against his system—upon the assumption that he procured the death of Servetus.

vidual. This negative virtue may, however, have been the result of a mere want of power rather than of inclination. I speak of facts, not of motives. I am aware that they are often confounded with the worthy Puritans of New England; and hence made to share largely in the obloquy which has, with or without reason, been so profusely heaped upon the latter by no very impartial judges. But this is a mistake. Presbyterians were, either by their own choice or by the policy of government, as effectually excluded from the early settlements of the Pilgrim Fathers, as were Jews, Quakers and Papists. Nor did a single Presbyterian minister find a *home* in all New England, until about the year 1719—when a few Irish families, with their pastor, were permitted or induced to settle at Londonderry in New Hampshire. And at this day, there are only about twenty Presbyterian clergymen in the six New England States. I do not say that Presbyterians were ever persecuted in New England, or that any oppressive laws were enacted expressly against them. All I mean to assert is, that they never attained the slightest degree of political influence in any part of that country, and consequently could never have persecuted other sects—as many affirm.*

They did not persecute the Roman Catholics in Maryland; as has been often proclaimed, and as multitudes still ignorantly believe. And for the best of all reasons: they never possessed the power of persecution in Maryland. They were themselves but barely tolerated in Maryland before the late Revolution. And even this precarious toleration was extorted from public opinion and never sanctioned by law, and was always attended with many vexations. It was under the government of England, and by the introduction of English laws, civil and ecclesiastical, that the Roman Catholics were deprived of the religious privileges originally guarantied by royal charter to lord Baltimore.

I have carefully traced the progress of Presbyterianism throughout the British Provinces of America down to the epoch of our Revolution. And I defy any man to produce a single case of persecution by Presbyterian authority or influence upon this continent. They were often persecuted, and generally liable to persecution, in New York, Virginia and

*See Appendix.

elsewhere. Nor did they anywhere, within the limits of the Middle and Southern Colonies, enjoy all the rights and franchises of British subjects, by law or charter or courtesy, except in New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Delaware; and also in Maryland prior to 1688.*

I may add moreover, in this connexion, that the Presbyterian clergy were to a man staunch uncompromising Whigs, from the beginning to the close of our revolutionary struggle for liberty and independence. I do not say that they were in principle more tolerant, or in action more patriotic, than other denominations. But I do say, they were not excelled by any in either respect.†

Again, if we may judge of a tree by its fruit—of a man's principles by his practice—of his faith by his works—we may cheerfully submit the cause of Presbyterianism and of Calvinism to this test. The Calvinistic Protestants of France, Switzerland, Germany, Holland, Scotland, England, Ireland, and these United States, including New England (for the Congregationalists are generally Calvinists,) will not be pronounced by the most determined foes of Calvinism, less moral, less intelligent, less amiable, less charitable, or in any respect more dangerous or unworthy citizens, than their neighbors of a different or more liberal creed.‡

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*In Rhode Island, all religionists were entitled to equal privileges from the beginning: and, of course, Presbyterians might have resided there in peace and security, had they pleased. And throughout New England, before the expiration of the seventeenth century, all vexatious persecution on account of religion had subsided, and a general toleration prevailed.

†The author does not affirm that Presbyterians in this country have never cherished or exhibited a persecuting *spirit*. On this point, men may decide as they please. He affirms that *in fact* they have never persecuted other denominations: and he is willing that this forbearance should be attributed solely to their want of political power. In a lower or milder sense, they may be said to have persecuted one another, in the usual mode, by polemical diatribes, spiritual terrors, and ecclesiastical censures. Beyond this species of domestic annoyance or persecution, they could not go. These however, at worst, are but family quarrels, with which other sects have no concern.

‡In the above appeal to "the most determined foes of Calvinism," the speaker was probably too confident either in the justice of his cause or in the candour of the tribunal to which he referred: as the following precious specimen may show.

"The Presbyterian clergy are loudest; the most intolerant of all sects, the most tyrannical and ambitious; ready at the word of the lawgiver, if such a word could be now obtained, to put the torch to

Now my single aim in all this rather desultory discussion, has been to show, that Presbyterians are no worse than other christian communities, whether we regard their creed or their discipline, their history or their morals—and not that they are better. I have been too long in the habit of mingling in social intercourse with good men of divers denominations, and of uniting in the worship of the Great Father and Saviour of all men in different churches, to indulge one unkindly sentiment towards any christian; or to judge uncharitably of any individual whose conduct accords with the gospel which he professes. I have never made an attempt, or uttered a syllable in public or private, from the pulpit or the academical chair, with a view to gain proselytes from sister churches. I would not, if I could, persuade one Baptist, Methodist or Episcopalian to become Presbyterian. I believe we may be all good Christians in our own several modes: and that we may dwell together in peace and harmony. Why should we not?

But Presbyterian ministers have not only the same right—it is their duty also—to explain and inculcate their own distinctive code and doctrines; as do the ministers of all other persuasions. As Presbyterians, they are bound in conscience to teach Presbyterian principles. Not, indeed, as indispensable to salvation, but as indispensable to the profession of the Presbyterian in contradistinction to every other system. To the perishing sinner, we preach Jesus Christ and him crucified, as the way, the truth and the life—the only name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. And if he believe with all the heart—with a faith that worketh by love and purifieth the heart and overcometh the world—we assure him of pardon, justification and life everlasting. We do not tell him to believe in any human creed or church in order to be saved or to become a christian, or to be entitled to baptism and other christian ordinances and privileges. If, however, he would join the Presbyterian Church, he must at

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the pile, and to rekindle in this virgin hemisphere the flames in which their oracle Calvin consumed the poor Servetus, because he could not find in his Euclid the proposition which has demonstrated that three are one, and one is three, nor subscribe to that of Calvin, that magistrates have a right to exterminate all heretics to Calvinistic creed. They pant to re-establish, by law, that holy inquisition, which they can now only infuse into *public opinion*."

[See Jefferson's Correspondence. Vol. 4. p. 321. First Edition.]

least assent to the usages and discipline of that particular church. If he would become a Presbyterian preacher, he is expected, as an honest man, to adopt *ex animo*, the entire Confession of Faith, agreeably to the natural, obvious, and primitive import of its perfectly simple and unambiguous phraseology. He has no alternative but either to redeem the pledge solemnly given and ratified by his ordination vows, or to leave with honour and a good conscience, and in charity and peace, the Presbyterian connexion. In his ordinary ministrations to a promiscuous assemblage of all classes, ages, sexes, and degrees of intelligence, he may not find it edifying or expedient to enter very profoundly and learnedly into the discussion of every abstruse and perplexing question or position contained in our church book. Indeed, I have never witnessed any instances of this species of indiscretion or rather presumption, except in the case of very young, or very weak, or very ignorant preachers.

"Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" Who can comprehend the entire vastness of his plans and purposes—of his providence and government—of his sovereignty, grace, mercy and justice—in reference to guilty, fallen, responsible man? In whatever form of words, or by whatever propositions, we may choose to express our inadequate ideas upon the momentous relations and overwhelming mysteries involved in such inquiries, we cannot expect to satisfy either our own minds or the minds of others. And yet these subtile, inexplicable, transcendental topics have occasioned an infinite deal of theological controversy and uncharitable warfare and bitter persecution. Here are difficulties as formidable, to say the least, to natural as to revealed religion; as confounding to the Deist as to the Christian; and which, assuredly, have not yet been encountered by the infidel or the philosopher, by the Universalist or the Arminian, with any more skill or success than by the old fashioned orthodox Calvinist.

The Calvinistic system, indeed, in reference to the very points at issue between Calvinists and their opponents, has been frequently pronounced the only consistent and rational scheme of faith, by men of the most gigantic vigour and reach of intellect, who have studied the subject simply as a branch

of spiritual or mental philosophy. It has been cordially embraced by not a few of the most pious and gifted among the devoted students, critics and expositors of the Holy Scriptures in every age. The celebrated Euler, it is well known, was a thorough conscientious Calvinist. And Sir David Brewster (himself as free from illiberal prejudice and sectarian bias as he is eminent for talent and science,) speaks of him and of Calvinism in the following terms. "Theology was one of his favourite studies, and his doctrines were the most rigid doctrines of Calvinism, the only system of religious truth which a philosopher can maintain."*

The learned and ingenious Bishop Horsley, in a solemn charge to the clergy of his diocese, exhorted them never to denounce Calvinism until they had diligently studied and thoroughly understood the works of Calvin, lest they should unwittingly calumniate a friendly ally, and dishonour the cause of truth and religion.† To all ignorant noisy impugners of Calvinism, the same judicious counsel may not be less seasonable and appropriate at the present day. Let them condescend to know somewhat of the subject whereof they dogmatize, before they finally condemn. I have never heard a sweeping unqualified denunciation of Calvinism from any man who attached a correct or even intelligible meaning to the term. That sort of thing, vulgarly abused and declaimed against as Calvinism, and charitably fathered upon Presbyterians as their own proper heritage, is as utterly foreign to their

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*[See article *Euler*, written by Dr Brewster, in the Edinburgh Encyclopædia. Vol. 8. p. 817.]

The author does not appeal to the authority of *great names* in order to establish the *truth* of Calvinism. He cites them merely to show that there is nothing in the system so monstrously absurd or repulsive as to expose it *prima facie* to the contempt or ridicule or abhorrence of Philosophy. And that learned, wise, and good men have yielded to it their deliberate assent, after the most profound and patient investigation. To err with such men as Euler and Edwards, cannot be folly or weakness or hypocrisy.

†Not having at hand the works of Bishop Horsley, and many years having elapsed since he perused them, the author relied on his memory for the substance of the *advice* referred to above. He has since met with the passage, and it is as follows:

"Take special care before you aim your shafts at Calvinism, that you know what is Calvinism, and what is not; that in that mass of doctrine, which it is of late become the fashion to abuse, under the name of Calvinism, you can distinguish with certainty between that part, which is nothing better than Calvinism, and that which belongs to our common christianity, and the faith of the reformed churches."

sentiments and mode of preaching, as it ever was or can be to those of any other christian sect.

Presbyterian Calvinism--if we must bear the odium of the ungracious epithet—is not fatalism. It does not destroy or impair the free agency of man, nor the use of means in every stage of his progress from earth to heaven, nor his perfect accountability for all his actions, nor the necessity of good works. It does not convert him into a machine, or treat him as such. It does not represent the Deity as the author of sin, or as in any wise constraining or tempting men to its commission. It does not foster a persecuting, selfish or exclusive spirit. Presbyterians, moreover, are forbidden to slander or unchurch other churches. Their Book commands them to believe nothing—to do nothing—except upon undoubted scriptural authority. It disclaims all support from the secular arm; and condemns, as antichristian, every attempt at uniting church and state. I mention these several items, in passing, that our own people may be reminded of the true genius of our system; and that strangers to its character, if any be present, may not be horrified at the very name of either Calvinism or American Presbyterianism. Let both friends and enemies study our standards before they hastily suspect or rashly censure. And let none deduce from our doctrines, practical consequences or theoretical absurdities, which we do not ourselves acknowledge or countenance.

I venture to assert, that, in no christian church on earth, is greater liberty allowed to both minister and people to regulate their faith and practice by the pure simple dictates of Scripture than in our own. The Bible is in fact their creed. To it they always recur for direction in every difficulty, and to it alone they appeal for decision in every controversy. So much so, that our stated pastors seldom refer or even allude to the Confession of Faith in their ordinary ministrations. And this is the first time in the course of my life, that I have had or have made occasion formally to introduce the book, or to discourse of Calvinism or Presbyterianism, before a popular assembly.*

*The author does not mean to justify this neglect of our church standards. He states the usage, so far as his own observation has enabled him to ascertain it. The Presbytery of West Tennessee being present at the delivery of this discourse, will account for its mixed character and for some of its peculiar features.

It is the duty of a Presbyterian minister, as it is of every other minister, to adapt his instructions to the wants and capacities of his hearers; to furnish milk to babes, strong meat to men, and as little of metaphysical subtilties to all as possible. The language of Scripture is always safe language: and it is generally the best language upon all recondite and controverted points, when properly cited and aptly applied. And the more he follows the scriptural order and arrangement and manner in his daily or weekly ministrations, the less of arbitrary system and of unskilful interpretation will be apparent. He will be more likely, in this way also, to unfold the whole counsel of God; and to show that, "all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Indeed, I see no way in which the work of instruction (and the pastor is a teacher) can be adequately performed, except by going through an entire book—a Gospel or an Epistle for example—in regular order from beginning to end.

4. In the fourth place: Some men judge of religion and of religious character, almost exclusively from what is called religious experience.—From internal exercises, emotions, impulses, hopes, fears, joys, terrors, nervous convulsions, or fancied illuminations. Now, of all these, only God and the parties affected can possibly take cognizance. What a man feels or experiences in his own heart may be ground of hope to himself, but is not the kind of evidence which he is required to exhibit to the world of his conversion. Ministers neglect or mistake their duty, when their preaching tends to excite or encourage delusions of this sort.

Great zeal in preaching, praying, exhorting, reproving—in attending upon the external ordinances of the gospel—in frequenting the places of public worship by day and by night—or any loud, visible, noisy, ostentatious display of fervour and devotion, whether by minister or people—cannot be accepted as infallible proof of christian piety or christian charity. Nay, martyrdom itself is not always a sure test of truth or even of sincerity. Men have honestly died for error: and they have died to seal with their blood a consistent profession, though against their judgment and conscience. There may

be, moreover, much liberality—giving of alms—aiding of charitable institutions—and a variety of benevolent exhibitions—without any genuine love to God or love to man.

There is a fashion in all these matters. And men are prone to follow the fashion in religion as in every thing else. In such circumstances, ministers are themselves exceedingly liable to be imposed on by counterfeit professions, even when they have no design to deceive or mislead others. It is difficult to check, turn back, or correct the popular current on this subject. It acquires a strength sometimes, perfectly furious and irresistible. Or the fashion becomes so fixed by long continued and undisputed custom, that to doubt its propriety would be accounted heretical or profane.

There has ever been a disposition or propensity to merge the whole of religion, or rather the ostensible evidence or test of conversion and christian character, into one single act, exercise, ceremony, or confession; or into a series of acts of the same species; or into certain periodical observances. Thus, mortifying, painful or expensive penances and sacrifices constitute the religious catholicon of one period or country. Implicit faith in an infallible church will suffice in another. Zeal for orthodoxy is all the rage at a different juncture. Heart exercises, inward spiritual promptings, and all the reveries of mysticism have their day. Then we behold the wild fire of passion in full blast:—Speaking and prophesying in unknown tongues: With all manner of strange, unsightly, unearthly and extravagant distortions of feature, limb and voice. By and by, comes the golden age of good deeds, of benevolent enterprise, of money begging and money giving. And the munificent benefactor of the church stands forth proudly conspicuous and pre-eminent among his peers. By giving a few hundreds from his many thousands, or a few thousands from his hoarded millions, he compromises all other claims upon his purse and his conscience: and while he enjoys, with infinite self-complacency, the incense of human flattery and applause, he expects to merit a high place in the ranks and in the palaces of the New Jerusalem. Others prefer a cheaper mode, keep aloof from charitable associations, take especial care of the main chance, and calmly settle down upon a single initiatory rite, administered with ceremonial precision, as a certain

passport to all the privileges and immunities of the church militant upon earth and of the church triumphant in heaven.

But to this specification of human inventions and refuges of lies, there is no end. The faithful watchman upon the walls of Zion will find it no gentle office or easy task to separate the gold from the dross; and to disabuse his flock of the multitudinous errors, evils, and counterfeit substitutes which are ever afloat in the world. Verily, he will never slumber upon a bed of roses, nor be suffered to relax his vigilance or his labours. He is a soldier—a general—always on the battle field; with a host of unconquered enemies around, and with many insidious spies in the midst of his camp. This is his true position from first to last. His whole life is one continued campaign of painful and most rigorous duty. However victorious and triumphant he may prove to-day, he will lose ground to-morrow, should he remit his accustomed ardor or effort in the smallest degree. He has engaged in a warfare, and is consecrated to a service, from which God alone can release him.

Having thus discoursed, at much greater length than I intended, upon some of the prominent differences among the several denominations of protestant christians, the question recurs: how ought our church to regard and treat other churches?

I answer, in the first place: It would be contrary to the express statutes and pervading spirit of our liberal code, to excommunicate, anathematize or condemn other churches, or to inflict upon them any judicial or formal censure whatever. If we do not like them, we may let them alone. I see no necessity or propriety in ever denouncing them from the pulpit. We cannot enlighten, convince, or benefit the distant or absent members of a heterodox church by preaching against them—much less by abusing them. If we believe them to be in such darkness and error as to endanger their salvation, christian charity and common humanity should induce us rather to send missionaries to convert them, as we would to Pagans, Jews and Mohammedans. Should a christian church refuse to acknowledge us as a christian church, we are not therefore bound to retaliate, and to render evil for evil. We ought rather to suffer wrong, and to leave the issue with God. Christian charity, however, does not require us to admit to the ordinances and privileges of our church, the members of any

other church, unless we are satisfied in regard to their faith, character and habitual practice. On this subject, as an independent christian society, we have a right to exercise our own judgment and discretion in the premises. And while we concede to all other denominations the same right, they can have no just ground of complaint or offence. Thus far, the course of duty and propriety seems pretty plain and obvious.

But, in the second place: How is a particular church or congregation, circumstanced for example as we of this church are in Nashville, to regulate its intercourse with the other churches in the same city? I answer, that in all cases of church fellowship and inter-communion, a perfect reciprocity of kind and friendly offices ought to obtain. Each should admit the other to be in all respects her equal. If we invite her members to commune with us, we ought, when occasion offers, cheerfully to commune with them at her own board. If we accept her invitation, we ought to reciprocate the favour or the courtesy. But if, on the other hand, she should admit us to her communion and refuse to come to ours; or if we should admit them to ours and refuse to go to hers; it is manifest that, after a fair experiment of this left-handed civility, all intercourse between the parties, as churches, must cease and determine.—Unless one party shall be willing to yield to the exclusive pretensions of the other. A concession, which neither christian charity nor the laws of self-respect can ever demand.

The same general rule is applicable to occasional attendance on the ordinary public worship of the several churches by the people, and to the exchange of pulpits by the clergy—as also to the use of each others' houses on any emergency either for divine service or other purposes—to the recognition of the validity of each others' official acts and ordinances, as baptism, the eucharist, ordination—and, indeed, to the entire subject, in all its details, of neighbourly intercourse and interchange of civilities. If the whole, and each particular, be not on a footing of acknowledged and open-hearted equality and reciprocity, the parties had better cherish the spirit of brotherly kindness and charity by keeping at a respectful distance from each others' holy festivals and holy places. Mutual suspicion, jealousy, irritation and hostility would be the natural and inevitable result of any half-way course or system. In

such matters, there must be no concealment, no duplicity, no mental reservations, no affected superiority, no parade of unmeaning liberality, no protecting condescension, none of that fastidious courtly *delicacy* which insinuates or seems to say, 'mine is better than thine,' and nothing of that lordly *churchism* and somewhat ludicrous bigotry (now indeed rather obsolete, though once a tremendous reality) which boldly proclaims, "my church is the only true church, and your church is no church at all."

We, as Presbyterians, I trust, will never arrogantly claim or covet what we would not cheerfully accord; nor stoop to surrender the smallest iota even of etiquette which would imply, or could be construed to imply, any inferiority on our part, or the acknowledgment of any superiority on the part of others.

None of these remarks are designed to have the slightest bearing on the common social intercourse of families or individuals. Such intercourse must be regulated by the tastes, interests or caprices of the parties themselves. We may visit, and receive the visits of Jews, Pagans, Turks or Mormonites, as may suit our fancy or inclination.

Now should any man conceit that I have betrayed an illiberal, partial or sectarian spirit in any portion of this discourse, I would respectfully beg him to inform us how he would speak of his own church under similar circumstances and in reference to the same points. Would he claim less for his church than I have claimed for mine? Would he concede more to other churches than I have freely conceded to all? Have I not assumed them to be equally honest and conscientious, and equally entitled to all the rights and privileges, temporal and spiritual, which, as religious associations, they may lawfully possess and exercise in this republic? Am I expected to express a preference for his church, or for any church, over my own? Will he not be satisfied that I leave him unmolested to think as highly of his own church and as humbly of mine as he pleases?

But gladly would I hail the dawn of a better day—of a purer christian era—when all such idle questions, and verbal controversies, and family quarrels, and jealous rivalries, and ambitious aspirings, shall be forgotten. When celestial charity

shall pervade the hearts and the ranks of the christian soldiery, and all the world be constrained to exclaim: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" When christian sects will strive, not for the mastery over one another, but for the mastery over their own evil tempers, and for the palm of glory in self-devotion to the common cause of God and the Saviour.

If charity is ever to have her perfect work in our world, a great revolution is yet to be anticipated. Evidently, the present character of the churches cannot be of long duration. Public opinion will not sustain or tolerate the continued violation of the first principles of the gospel system. Neither sectarian orthodoxy or austerity, nor polemic or doctrinal theology—any more than the trumpery of by-gone ages of darkness, superstition, credulity and cunning—can forever withstand the evidence of truth, or be mistaken for that faith which worketh by *love*, and which enjoins or implies absolute, universal, unreserved, filial obedience to the precepts, institutions, example and instructions of the Lord Jesus Christ. A far more radical reformation in christian theory and practice is yet to take place, than was effected or dreamed of by Luther and his scholastic compeers. Great and marvellous as was their achievement, they failed, as we have seen, to learn the very alphabet of christian charity—of that law of love, which irradiates every page of the gospel and constitutes, as it were, its very soul and essence, and upon which "hang all the law and the prophets." They cherished the ancient Romish heresy, and enacted over again the tragedies in which Saul of Tarsus delighted before his conversion, and verily thought they were doing God service. I have already suggested the proper apology for this strange delusion of the noble reformers and of their age. It proves that *habit* is stronger than principle; or rather that it subverts and supplants principle altogether, and prevents our seeing for a season the light of truth and the beauty of holiness, though shining upon us like the noon-day sun in all his glorious splendour.

Three hundred years, devoted to the study and teaching of the Bible of truth and charity, have not sufficed to eradicate from Protestant Christendom this one monstrous heresy. Men persecute one another now, not with sword and fire, but with

tongue and pen, as heartily as did Luther and Calvin each other and their common enemies. And if the religious periodicals of the day can be relied on, there are divisions in our own church, with party champions at their head, who bandy the epithets of dogmatical controversy and theological virulence, with as much adroitness and with as charitable a temper, as ever did any of their amiable and accomplished predecessors. Verily, it does not become us to magnify the mote in the eye of our good brother, the Pope, till we cast the beam out of our own.

There never was a period when the Presbyterian Church in our country exhibited an aspect, or stood in an attitude or predicament, so critical and perilous as at this moment:—whether we consider its internal convulsions or its external relations and prospects. Threatened with dissolution or schism from agitators and nullifiers within her own bosom—assailed by christians, politicians, and infidels of almost every sect and school in the land—denounced as bigots and fanatics, as the enemies of civil and religious liberty, as the ambitious aspirants to universal ecclesiastical dominion, as the insidious plotters and conspirators to effect a union of church and state, with a view to become the lords paramount of both:—how greatly do we need the spirit of wisdom, of meekness, of courage, of prayer, of candour, of mutual forbearance, of union, peace and charity! With us, undoubtedly, the great work of reform must commence at home. The *Achan* of uncharitableness in our own camp must first be dragged to light and consigned to the executioner, before success will crown our efforts or victory attend our banners in battle against the proud army of aliens without and abroad.

But the work must and will be carried on and completed, under the good providence of God, by human agency of some kind. The world is yet to be conquered and evangelized by christian soldiers and christian missionaries. But Christendom itself must first be purified and converted to a better faith. And every church must learn her own duty before she will be accepted as an auxiliary or ally by the great Captain of salvation. What part is the Presbyterian Church destined to act in this mighty enterprise?

Eighteen hundred years ago, the command was issued: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." The apostles obeyed this command to the letter. But since their day, what have christians been doing? except quarrelling among themselves; and plundering, destroying, oppressing and enslaving every other people within reach of their avarice, their ambition and their cruelty? Is such to be the character of christians for ever? Is the christian dignitary to luxuriate in wealth and ease and splendour—is the popular preacher to be caressed and puffed and *starred* throughout a nation—is the devoted, zealous missionary, who ventures across the Mountains or the Ocean, to be accounted a martyr, and to read his praises in a hundred journals as a prodigy of christian daring and self-denial?—While thousands of our people and of every christian people are annually encountering all the dangers, privations, diseases, and horrors of every climate and season, of every desert and wilderness, of every sea and ocean and bay and river and coast and island, at the bidding of avarice, and without a murmur?

Here again, is much to unlearn, and still more to be learned. We are to learn that the duty of preaching the gospel, not merely among ourselves, but to every nation and kindred and people and tongue under heaven, is to be performed manfully, fearlessly, cheerfully—as an honour and not as a sacrifice. That the gospel is to be preached, not for praise, vain glory, or filthy lucre; but as a high privilege and a sacred obligation. That those who cannot labour in the word and doctrine as preachers, missionaries and teachers, will delight to contribute their money to educate, train up, and sustain the duly qualified and authorized heralds of salvation in sufficient numbers to convert and christianize the whole family of mankind. The time must come, when christian men will consecrate their gold and silver mainly, if not exclusively, to this most legitimate object, and esteem it an honour thus to become co-workers with God and his faithful servants in the glorious and stupendous enterprise of conquering a world for Christ and for Heaven.

My own particular sphere of ministerial duty has ever been extremely humble and limited, as regards age and numbers, though not unimportant in reference to the ultimate welfare of

the church and the public. My province, too, has always demanded a different kind and form of preaching from that which obtains in a popular assembly. A word in season—a little here and a little there—and something every day to one or a dozen, as occasion offered or suggested—without touching on points of theological or ecclesiastical controversy, and without the formal method of regular sermonizing—has been the fashion of my own very imperfect essays in the good work of the gospel ministry. I know nothing from experience of the cares, anxieties, dangers, labours, responsibiilities and trials of the pastoral relation. I do not presume therefore to instruct or to counsel a veteran brother, whose praise is in all the churches; whose labours of love amongst us have already been evidently owned and most signally blessed by the great Bishop of souls; whom we have, with one voice, invited to our city and welcomed to our hearts as our spiritual guide and father; and to whom we are about to pledge the right hand of fellowship, and to commit our dearest interests for time and for eternity.

Happy—thrice happy—may this sacred connexion prove to him, to us, and to our children! And may the blessing of Almighty God—the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost—abide upon him in all his ministrations; upon us in all our ways; and upon the holy Catholic Church for ever. Amen!

APPENDIX.

[See Page 36.]

Mr Jefferson, in his Notes on Virginia, at the beginning of Query 17th, speaks as follows:

"The first settlers in this country [Virginia] were emigrants from England, of the English church, just at a point of time when it was flushed with complete victory over the religious of all other persuasions. Possessed, as they became, of the powers of making, administering, and executing the laws, they showed equal intolerance in this country with their Presbyterian brethren, who had emigrated to the northern government [New England.]"

Matthew Carey, in an essay read before the American Philosophical Society and published in the newspapers in 1828, after an appropriate and very just eulogium upon Lord Baltimore and the liberal policy of his American government and institutions, thus proceeds:

"The merit of Calvert is greatly enhanced by the contrast between his system and that of Virginia and New England. In the former colony, the Protestant Episcopalian religion was established; in the latter, Presbyterianism. The Episcopalians persecuted the Presbyterians and other denominations but their own, in Virginia,—and the Presbyterians persecuted the Episcopalians in New England. Maryland, the only Catholic colony in the country, afforded an asylum to the persecuted religionists of both descriptions, and indeed of all other descriptions."

"For the honour of human nature, it were to be wished that a veil could be drawn over the residue of the proceedings in this case; as they are foul and dishonourable. Some time after the Revolution of 1688, the Protestant and Presbyterian members of assembly in Maryland, acting in concert, with a degree of ingratitude which every honourable man must regard with abhorrence, passed the whole body of the barbarous and piratical penal laws against the Catholics, which

were in force in England, by which the Catholics were not only deprived of their seats in the legislature, and disqualified therefrom in future, but subject to a severe persecution. History, in the odious details of human turpitude, presents nothing much more revolting."

Mr Carey quotes from Burke the following passages: "This liberty [of conscience] which was never in the least instance violated, encouraged a great number, not only of the Church of England, but of Presbyterians, Quakers, and all kinds of dissenters, to settle in Maryland."

"When, upon the revolution, power changed hands in that province, the new men made but an indifferent requital for the liberties and indulgences they had enjoyed under the old administration. They not only deprived the Roman Catholics of all share in the government, but of all the rights of freemen. They have even adopted the whole body of the penal laws of England against them. They are at this day, [1770,] meditating new laws in the same spirit, and they would undoubtedly go to the greatest lengths in this respect, if the moderation and good sense of the government in England, did not set some bounds to their bigotry."

I have not taken the trouble to examine how the two above cited passages are connected by their author. I give them as Mr Carey has joined them together. It is certainly true that, before the subversion of the proprietary government, every *christian* sect was tolerated in Maryland. And it is equally true that, after the revolution of 1688, English Episcopacy reigned absolute and uncontrolled in that province. Dr Ramsay, in his History of the United States, [Vol. I. p. 220,] presents the simple facts in the following terms:

"In Maryland and Virginia, a policy less favourable to population, and somewhat different from that of Pennsylvania, took place. The church of England was incorporated, simultaneously, with the first settlement of Virginia; and, in the lapse of time, it also became the established religion of Maryland. In both these provinces, long before the American revolution, that church possessed a legal pre-eminence, and was maintained at the expense, not only of its own members, but of all other denominations. This deterred great numbers, especially of the Presbyterian denomination, who had emi-

grated from Ireland, from settling within the limits of these governments, and fomented a spirit of discord, between those who belonged to, and those who dissented from the established church."

"In Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and New Jersey, there never was any established religion." [Ibid. p. 232.]

The proprietors of New Jersey, in 1676, when that province included a larger proportion of Presbyterians (though not yet organized as a church) than any other upon this continent, passed a code of fundamental laws, or perhaps rather a Bill of Rights, which contained the following liberal provision or declaration:

"That no men, nor number of men upon earth, have power or authority to rule over men's consciences in religious matters; therefore it is consented, agreed, ordained, that no person or persons whatsoever, within the said province, at any time or times hereafter, shall be any ways, upon any pretence whatsoever, called in question or in the least punished or hurt, either in person, estate, or privilege, for the sake of his opinion, judgment, faith or worship, towards God in matters of religion. But that all and every such person or persons freely and fully have and enjoy his and their judgments and the exercise of their consciences in matters of religious worship throughout all the said province."

No existing church or sect ought to be arraigned or censured on account of the delusions or errors or crimes of their predecessors. The persecutions of past ages are not chargeable upon the Roman Catholics, or Episcopalians, or Puritans, or Presbyterians of the present generation: nor are they blameworthy on this score, unless they still maintain the same persecuting dogmas, or manifest the same persecuting spirit. That the Presbyterian Church in the United States utterly disclaims all such pretensions, and that she cherishes as catholic a spirit as any other church in the world, may be charitably presumed from the following, among other passages which might be cited from her Confession of Faith and plan of government:

"The Presbyterian Church in the United States of America are unanimously of opinion:

That God alone is Lord of the conscience; and hath left it free from the doctrine and commandments of men, which are in

any thing contrary to his word, or beside it in matters of faith or worship: therefore they consider the rights of private judgment, in all matters that respect religion, as universal and unalienable: they do not even wish to see any religious constitution aided by the civil power, further than may be necessary for protection and security, and, at the same, be equal and common to all others."

"That, in perfect consistency with the above principle of common right, every Christian church, or union, or association of particular churches, is entitled to declare the terms of admission into its *communion*, and the qualifications of its ministers and members, as well as the whole system of its internal government which Christ hath appointed: that, in the exercise of this right, they may, notwithstanding, err, in making the terms of communion either too lax or too narrow; yet, even in this case, they do not infringe upon the liberty, or the rights of others, but only make an improper use of their own."

"They also believe that there are truths and forms with respect to which men of good characters and principles may differ. And in all these they think it the duty, both of private Christians and societies, to exercise mutual forbearance towards each other."

"That all church power, whether exercised by the body in general, or in the way of representation by delegated authority, is only ministerial and declarative; That is to say, that the Holy Scriptures are the only rule of faith and manners; that no church judicatory ought to pretend to make laws, to bind the conscience in virtue of their own authority; and that all their decisions should be founded upon the revealed will of God."

"It is absolutely necessary that the government of the church be exercised under some certain and definite form. And we hold it to be expedient, and agreeable to scripture and the practice of the primitive christians, that the church be governed by congregational, presbyterial, and synodical assemblies. In full consistency with this belief, we embrace in the spirit of charity, those christians who differ from us, in opinion or in practice, on these subjects."

Erratum.—For *hordes* on page 15, second line from top, read *hoards.*